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UNITED STATES

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

BUREAU OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC COMMERCE

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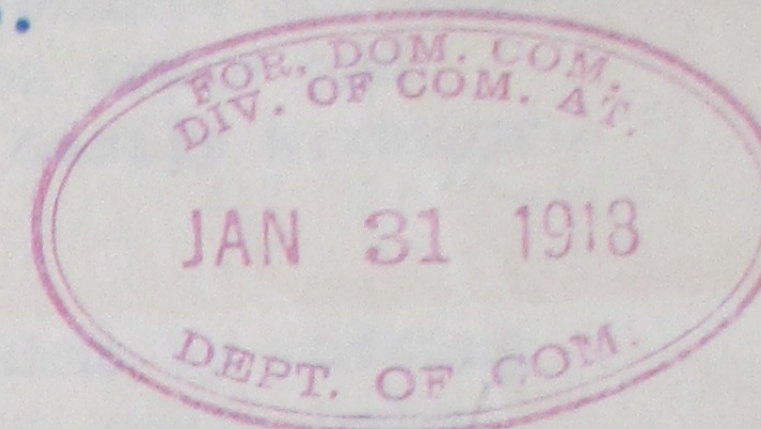
OFFICE OF COMMERCIAL ATTACHE
PEKING, CHINA

American Legation.

December 29, 1917.

Subject: Selection of Men for Military Service
in China - Commercial Significance.

Chief, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce,
Department of Commerce,
Washington.



Sir:

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I enclose a very interesting and timely suggestion made by Major A. Bassett, Judge Advocate of the China Expedition, to his commanding officer, in regard to the selection of men for service with the American troops in China, advocating the selection of these troops in a way which while it will not detract from the military objective, will assist at the same time in furthering our commerce and trade in China.

One of the essentials to American trade extension in China is men, American men trained in the field. China's foreign trade is in the hands of foreigners and will so continue for many years to come. American business will only grow and develop in a large way in China when handled through American organizations in the field, under the control of well trained Americans. The day of the compradore or Chinese go-between is passing and the foreign business man of the future to be a success, must come into close contact with the Chinese. A knowledge of the Chinese language and of the customs of the people is most helpful to the American business man in China, and will be even more so in the future, in fact, the day is not far distant when American firms in China will have to have Americans in their employ who understand the language and customs of the people, if these firms will compete successfully with other foreign concerns in China. Major Bassett's suggestion is indeed a timely one. It would seem that it might be possible without much trouble and by the exercising of a bit of care, to draft young men into the service for the China Expedition, who would be suited to foreign trade and who would welcome an opportunity of learning to know something of China, the language and the people, through the opportunity accorded by service in the North China regiment. Fortunately the language of Tientsin is the Northern Mandarin, or the official language of China. Mandarin is spoken by probably 3/5 of the population of China. Climatic conditions at Tientsin are favorable to study. Furthermore, Tientsin City is the second city in China in population. It is a great import and export centre.

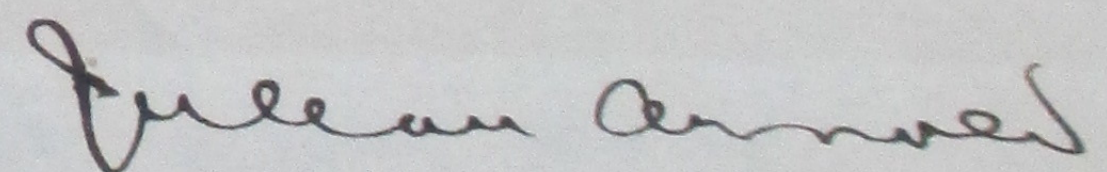
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We have here in Peking 90 miles from Tientsin, the North China Language School, under the direction of Dr. Pettus, an American. This school is a great success and is handling about 100 American and British students of the Chinese language. Dr. Pettus would undoubtedly be very willing to organize a school at Tientsin for our regiment there, which would permit the young men in the regiment giving considerable of their leisure time, in a systematic and expeditious way to the study of Chinese. Special talks on China trade and other matters of use to such a class, could also be easily arranged. This office would be glad to assist in this matter.

In addition to helping our trade position in China by putting into effect the plan as proposed by Major Bassett, it would help the young men in our army contingent here in China, for conditions in Tientsin do not offer to young men in the military service the wholesome surroundings which obtain in American communities. As a means of encouraging our young men detailed to service in the army contingent at Tientsin, to give their leisure time to wholesome and useful pursuits, a course in Chinese language and things Chinese preparatory to possible business connections in China after they are mustered out, would be very advantageous. A great deal, however, depends upon the character of the man sent out. For this reason it is proposed that care be exercised in the selection of the men sent to China and that advantage be taken of this very favorable opportunity, to include in the quota a number of young business men ambitious to enter into the field of foreign trade in China, where young Americans trained in China are in great demand and will continue to be in demand in connection with American trade activity.

Very truly yours,



Commercial Attaché.

Enclosure: as stated.

Tientsin, China,
December 18, 1917.

MEMORANDUM OF SUGGESTION MADE TO THE COMMANDING OFFICER CHINA
EXPEDITION FOR SELECTION OF MEN FOR SERVICE WITH THE AMERICAN
TROOPS IN CHINA.

1. I desire to bring to your attention a suggestion for selecting the personnel of the troops to be used in China during the war with a view of promoting American trade in the Far East after the war.
2. There are being drafted into the new army a large number of young business men who as soon as peace is declared will be mustered out. If the young officers and men assigned to this contingent were carefully selected with a view of bringing to China young men who would become interested in foreign trade it is probable that when they are mustered out a large percentage of them would desire to remain in China and engage in business. During their leisure hours opportunities could be made for such men to study the Chinese language and to become acquainted with business opportunities in China and with Chinese trade methods.
3. The most important consideration would be the method of selection. No doubt the Department of Commerce would assist in the matter and I think that probably the American Asiatic Society and large business concerns engaged in business in China would take an interest in it.
4. This contingent would be benefited by being made up of a class of men who would be interested in their surroundings and who would desire to be discharged with good records.
5. If the suggestion commends itself to the higher authorities the China Expedition would become a training school for men who desire to engage in foreign trade after the war.

A. BASSETT.

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6540
7-34

February 26, 1918.

Mr. Julean Arnold, Commercial Attaché,
Care of American Legation,
Peking, China.

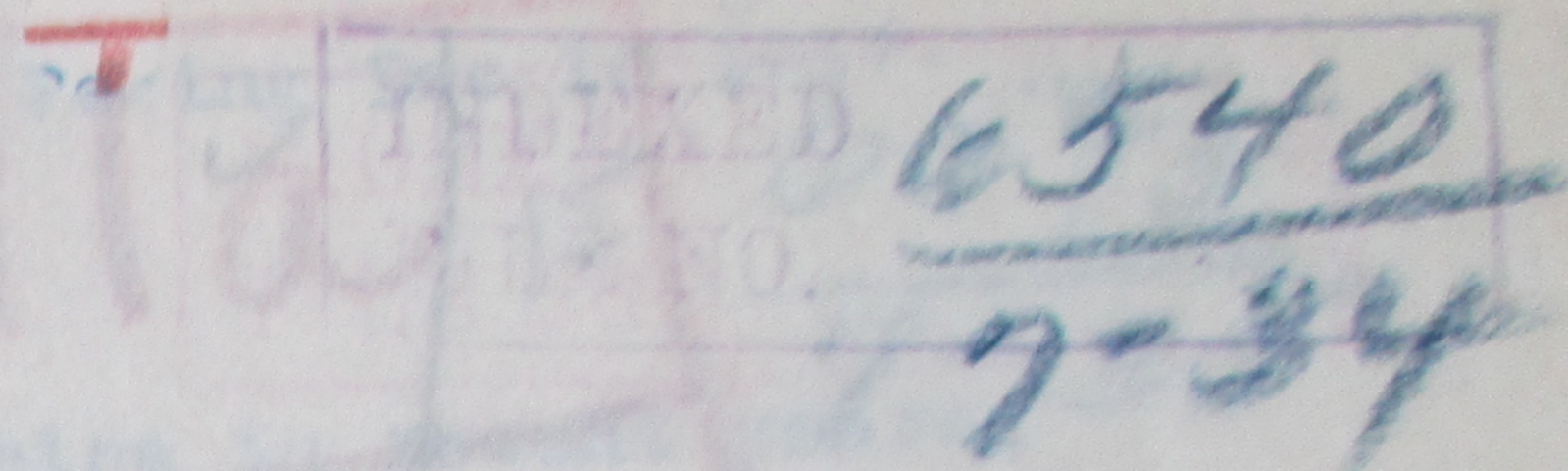
Dear Mr. Arnold:

We noted with interest your letter of December 29, together with the enclosed memorandum by Major A. Bassett, Judge Advocate of the China Regiment of the American army stationed in Tientsin, with regard to the selection of men for service with the American troops in China in a way which will assist our firms in China in securing adequately trained men for commercial work in the future.

This matter has been given careful consideration, and has been discussed with various officials of the War Department. The Bureau fully agrees that the scheme is a good one in principle, and the War Department does not oppose it on general grounds. There are, however, difficulties in the way of accomplishing anything of importance with regard to it in this country at the present time. In the first place, Major Bassett's memorandum was apparently written under the impression that some of the men obtained by the recent draft legislation would be sent out to fill in gaps that may occur in our forces in China. Inquiry, however, indicates that the War Department has no intention of doing this. They inform us that all the men required to fill the quota of the China Regiment will be obtained in the future, as in the past, by requisition on the Commanding General of the Army at Manila. While, therefore, the War Department would not object to referring a formal request to Manila for such compliance as might be practicable, it seems questionable with the present congestion of business relating to the Army, whether such a formal suggestion would accomplish anything; it also appears that it is not necessary in order to permit the Commanding General in Manila, if he can be personally interested in the matter to do all that can be done to further the plan. We suggest, therefore, that you and Major Bassett take the matter up further with the officers of the China Regiment, and suggest their carrying it to Manila formally or informally, or both, and ascertaining what can be done in that direction.

It does not seem likely that the number of men in the army as a result of voluntary enlistment, who would be interested in training for future commercial work in China, as your plan suggests, and who could be selected from the forces in Manila, would be very large; but there would no doubt be some such men and there seems no reason to think that

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a larger number could be secured by handling the matter from this end.

If, after having taken the matter up on the basis suggested above, in China and Manila, there appears to be anything else which the Bureau can do to further it in the United States, we shall be glad to hear from you further.

Very truly yours,

Commercial Attache Division.

JRA-AMC